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Kindness, Generosity, and Service – the Legacy of Ed Brooks

Ed Brooks was a man who wore many hats (he'd probably tell you that was to keep the sun from burning his head). He was a husband, a father to three daughters, a grandfather to five grandchildren, a farmer, a legislator, and a town chairman – but to those of us who knew him, he was our friend and neighbor. For the past two years, he fought leukemia bravely – but the day we all hoped wouldn't come arrived this week. As his obituary said, he passed away surrounded by his favorite ladies on Tuesday.

Ed touched our lives over the years with his humor, his words of wisdom, and his generosity. He believed strongly in encouraging the next generation of farmers – that's why he always purchased animals from 4-H kids at the fairs throughout the area. He supported many charities and causes – but he did so quietly because the goal was always more important to him than the glory.

As a legislator, he was a champion for the 50th district (which he rightly called “the best district”), and for rural Wisconsin as a whole. He was a founding member of the Rural Wisconsin Initiative, and he worked diligently to bridge the rural/urban gap and make sure that our area had equal opportunity and a fair shake.

Ed's generosity, kindness, and selfless service will live on for many years to come – he built something that is sought by many but is difficult to achieve – a lasting legacy. That doesn't change the fact that his loss hurts.

We all mourn in different ways. For me, I decided to take a long walk in the cool night. Standing under the stars, I remembered a man who brought a lot of light into the world – usually through the twinkle in his eye that many of us knew so well. Our community is a different place because of him, and it will be a different place without him.

Last May, when Ed announced that he was stepping away from the legislature, he wrote “Sometimes, it's too hard to say good bye, so I won't. Instead, I'll say thank you.”

Thank you, Ed – I miss you already.